

2008 Child and Family Services Review Summary

Introduction

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was developed as a result of the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act, which authorized the federal Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family service programs with regard to compliance with state plan requirements in Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The CFSR is implemented by the Children's Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The reviews are intended to help states improve Child Welfare Services programs and the outcomes for families and children who use those services. The reviews also identify strengths and needs in states' programs. The review process includes a statewide assessment, onsite review of 65 cases, and stakeholder interviews at the State and county level. Based on findings derived from the statewide assessment, the State Data Profile, 65 case review, and interviews and focus groups conducted with stakeholders, the State must develop a Program Improvement Plan to address areas of concern. California underwent a CFSR in 2002 (Round I) and is currently undergoing another CFSR (Round II).

Overview

- For its second CFSR, California completed its Statewide Assessment in December 2007.
- The 2008 California CFSR Onsite Review was conducted the week of February 4, 2008 in Fresno, Los Angeles and Santa Clara Counties. A total of 65 cases were reviewed.
- CFSR assesses performance on:
 - 23 items relevant to 7 outcomes, and
 - 22 items pertaining to 7 systemic factors
- For a State to be in substantial conformity with an outcome, 95 percent of cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome.
- For a State to be in substantial conformity with a systemic factor, a score of 3 or 4 must be attained (scoring is based on a 4 point scale with 4 indicating the highest level of compliance).

- States that are not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern.

Changes for 2008 CFSR

Like many other states reviewed, California did not achieve substantial conformity on any of the outcomes assessed in the 2008 CFSR. Despite not achieving substantial conformity on the 2008 CFSR, progress has been made in California in that the state met a substantial majority of the 2002 PIP targets. Of the fourteen outcomes and systemic factors the state met the target for all but one of the 2002 PIP targets.

Between the development of the 2002 PIP and the 2008 CFSR, ACF revised the national standards by raising performance benchmarks. California's performance in the first round is NOT directly comparable to performance in the second round (especially percentages) because of methodological differences.

Key reasons for difficulty in comparing performance from 2002 and 2008 CFSR:

- An increase in the sample size from 50 to 65 cases.
- Stratification of the sample to ensure a minimum number of cases in key program areas, resulting in variations in the number of cases relevant for specific outcomes and items.
- Changes in criteria for specific items to increase consistency and to ensure an assessment of critical areas, such as child welfare agency efforts to involve non-custodial parents.
- Data used to measure many of the outcomes were modified.

Results from the 2008 CFSR

California did not achieve substantial conformity with any of the seven outcomes reviewed. Following is a summary of the highest and lowest conformity outcomes.

Highest Conformity Outcomes *(although NOT in substantial conformity)*

- Safety Outcome 1 (defined as children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect)
 - 80.6 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome.

- Safety Outcome 2 (defined as children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate)
 - 76.9 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome.
- Permanency Outcome 2 (Defined as continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children)
 - 79.5 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome.
- Well-Being Outcome 2 (Defined as children receive services to meet their educational needs)
 - 88.0 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome.
- Well-Being Outcome 3 (Defined as children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs)
 - 81 percent of the cases were found to have substantially achieved this outcome.

Lowest Conformity Outcomes

- Permanency Outcome 1 (Defined as children have permanency and stability in their living situations) continues to be out of substantial conformity.
 - Only 41 percent of the cases reviewed had been substantially achieved.
- Well-Being Outcome 1 (Defined as families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs)
 - Only 58.5 percent of the cases reviewed had been substantially achieved.

See Attachment A: Outcome and Systemic Factors Matrix for complete outcomes and systemic factors performance.

Strategies Going Forward

CDSS worked with many state and community partners to develop six broad strategies to improve outcomes and systemic factors and achieve conformity with federal standards. These strategies will play a significant role in laying the foundation for change in the State and serve as a stimulus for system improvement and achievement of PIP targets. The CDSS is in the process of developing improvement targets with ACF. The targets will be established once the PIP is approved; approval is anticipated by December 2008. Proposed strategies include:

- I. Expand use of participatory case planning strategies.

- Initial findings show a need to engage youth, families, caregivers, tribes and service providers in the case planning and decision making processes. Some examples include Family Group Conferencing, Family to Family/Team Decision Making, and Wraparound. These programs engage youth and families in case planning and decision making.
- II. Sustain and enhance permanency efforts across the life of the case.
- Even though progress has been made, efforts to get a permanent family for a child do not always continue when reunification (returning youth to their family) is not successful or when adoption or guardianship is not readily available. The State must strengthen efforts towards finding a permanent family for a child in a timely manner. This will help prevent children and youth staying in foster care longer than needed. Caregivers, courts and tribes must become more involved.
- III. Enhance and expand caregiver recruitment, training, and support efforts.
- There are not enough foster homes for children and youth in need of foster care. There is a need to strengthen recruitment and retention efforts to ensure placements for foster children and youth are available and stable. There is also a need to find and support extended family and kin. Training and support for foster families needs to be improved.
- IV. Expand options and create flexibility for services and supports to meet the needs of children and families.
- Not enough services are within the reach of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Limited access to high quality mental health services, inpatient substance abuse treatment, therapeutic foster care, and post adoption and guardianship services were shown to be among the most needed. Practices such as Wraparound improved access through coordination of services (the Wraparound approach is an intensive, individualized care management process that allows for youth with the most serious emotional and behavioral problems to be served in their home and community). Not enough transportation services and gaps in foreign language interpreters and culturally trained providers were also identified as barriers to getting services.
- V. Sustain and expand staff/supervisor training.
- One of the improvement activities created during the first CFSR was the implementation of a standardized core set of courses to train new social workers and supervisors. It also provided for ongoing training. It was put into place to have uniform training across the State. New rules were implemented July 1, 2008 to make the core training a mandatory requirement. Also, there is a need to focus on training related to high needs children and youth. Probation staff reported their need for increased child welfare training as well.

VI. Strengthen Implementation of the Statewide Safety Assessment System.

- Although there are indications that the standardized safety assessment system is effective in assessing risk and identifying the services needed to address risks, some concerns were identified in the CFSR. In a few cases, some services were provided, but they did not adequately address the safety issues in the family, and the children remained at risk in the home. In several cases, there was a general lack of adequate safety and risk assessments in the child's home during the period under review.
- Implementation of the standardized safety assessment process ensures that families are systematically assessed for safety, risks and needs throughout the life of the case. As cases move forward to comprehensive assessment and service planning, services and resources are evaluated for effectiveness in reducing risk and potential for addressing necessary changes in family functioning.

The complete CFSR report and related items are available online at <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/PG1520.htm> (note: look for future documents to be posted at this site).

Attachment A: Outcomes and Systemic Factors Matrix

Summary of 2008 CFSR Report		
Safety and Permanency Outcomes	Substantial Conformity?	% of Cases Substantially Achieved
Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	NO	80.6
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes when possible and appropriate	NO	76.9
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations	NO	41.0
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved	NO	79.5
Child and Family Well Being Outcomes	Substantial Conformity?	% of Cases Substantially Achieved
Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs	NO	58.5
Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive services to meet their educational needs	NO	88.0
Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive services to meet their physical and mental health needs	NO	81.0
Systemic Factors	Substantial Conformity?	Score ⁱ
Statewide Information System (<i>system to identify status, location & goals for children in foster care</i>)	YES	3
Case Review System (<i>completion of periodic reviews, timely permanency hearings, etc.</i>)	NO	2
Quality Assurance System (<i>developed standards to ensure safety and health of children</i>)	YES	3
Training (<i>staff development and training for caseworkers, parents, caregivers, etc.</i>)	NO	2
Service Array (<i>services in place to assess strengths and needs of families, accessibility of services</i>)	NO	2
Agency Responsiveness to the Community (<i>engagement with community stakeholders, provision of reports & coordination with federal programs</i>)	YES	3
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention (<i>standards for foster homes that are applied equally, diligent efforts to recruit foster families</i>)	NO	2

ⁱ Scores are based on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 signifies the lowest compliance with a fixed standard and 4 signifies the highest compliance level. A score of 1 or 2 is assigned a rating of "Not in Substantial Conformity" and a score of 3 or 4 is assigned a rating of "Substantial Conformity".